KENYA

NATIONAL SETTLEMENT VISION

The Surgical City — Finishing What Was Started

Mji ni Watu. Tunaujenga. Tunauendesha.

The City is its People. We Build It. We Run It.

Kenya National Settlement Programme
Settlement Maintenance Corps — National Vision Document
2026

PREAMBLE: THE SURGICAL CITY DOCTRINE

Nairobi is not a broken city. It is an unfinished one. Built for 200,000 people in the colonial era, asked to serve 7 million today on the same pipes, the same roads, the same drains — it performs miraculously given what it has been asked to do. The matatu networks that move 3 million people daily, the jua kali economy that employs hundreds of thousands, the informal markets that feed the city — these are not signs of failure. They are signs of extraordinary human ingenuity filling the gaps the formal system left.

The National Settlement Programme does not tear down what exists and rebuild from scratch. It applies a surgical methodology: working with the living city, below its surface and within its fabric, completing the infrastructure that was always supposed to be there. Not disrupting the heartbeat while replacing the organs.

This doctrine applies equally to every Kenyan city and town. Nairobi is the primary case study. The standard, the code, and the Maintenance Corps apply nationally — to Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, and every county town across the 47 counties. The transformation of Kenya's urban environment is not a Nairobi project. It is a national programme delivered locally.

THE DOCTRINE	The city Nairobi already is — functional, energetic, creative, resilient — plus the infrastructure it was always supposed to have. One city. Not two.

The Five Governing Principles

Everything in the programme flows from five principles that are not negotiable:

- Work with what exists, not against it. The matatu is the transit system. The jua kali craftsman is the manufacturing sector. Formalise, upgrade, and connect — never evict before the replacement works.
- Infrastructure first, regulation second. You cannot enforce rules about waste disposal without collection infrastructure. You cannot enforce building standards without sewerage. Build the system, then enforce connection to it.
- Invisible upgrades, minimal disruption. Tunnel Boring Machines under live streets. One trench, all services. The underground city is rebuilt without stopping the city above.
- The block is the unit of change. Not the city. Not the ward. The block. Each completed block is proof of concept. The blocks compound over 15 years into a transformed city.
- Maintenance is built in. Every upgrade comes with its maintenance team, budget, and schedule from day one. The broken borehole is the symbol of every failed programme in Kenya's history. This programme ends that pattern.

PART ONE: THE SURGICAL METHODOLOGY

1.1 The Standards Grid — Diagnosis Before Construction

Before a single piece of infrastructure is upgraded, the entire city is mapped against the Kenya Settlement Code — the unified national standard for every service in every settlement. Every block in every city receives a score across six dimensions: streets, water, sewerage, drainage, waste, and facilities. The score determines the upgrade priority sequence. The worst-served areas go first. Not the most politically convenient. The most deprived.

The standard is ambitious. It is applied to every block. Where physical constraint makes full compliance impossible — a 3-metre pathway in a dense informal settlement — the programme applies the standard to what can be done, documents the constraint, and programmes its resolution. The standard is never lowered. Exceptions are documented and scheduled.

1.2 The Underground Protocol — One Trench, All Services

When any street is opened for any reason, all five service corridors are upgraded simultaneously: water main, sewer main, storm drain, power conduit, and fibre conduit. The coordination between utilities that has essentially never happened in Nairobi's history becomes mandatory under the programme. One trench. One time. All services. The road is resurfaced once.

For primary trunk infrastructure under major arterials, Tunnel Boring Machines eliminate surface disruption entirely. The new sewer trunk, the new water main, the new storm drain are bored parallel to the existing infrastructure without opening the surface. The street above continues to function. The city does not stop.

TBM PRINCIPLE	The underground city is rebuilt without stopping the city above. A Nairobi resident on Jogoo Road does not know the new sewer trunk is being bored 8 metres beneath their feet.

1.3 The Block Programme — Sequential Transformation

The upgrade programme works block by block through every neighbourhood, every city, every county town. Each block is a complete unit: underground services, street surface, kerbs and drainage, lighting, footpaths, and waste collection point. When a block is completed it is handed to the ward Maintenance Corps team, who maintain it permanently from that day forward.

Blocks in different parts of the city are upgraded simultaneously — the programme is running in 50 or 100 locations across the city at any given time, not sequentially from one end to the other. Adjacent blocks continue to function normally while their neighbours are upgraded. The city is never entirely under construction.

1.4 The Kenya Settlement Code

The national standard codified into a single published document, distributed to every county government, every ward administration, and every Maintenance Corps deployment. The code specifies street standards by class, service standards by density, facilities standards by population catchment, maintenance schedules by infrastructure type, and the 72-hour response standard for all maintenance failures.

The code is not a punishment instrument. It is a budget instrument. Every county that wants Corps deployment — and every county does — must budget the deployment cost. The national government monitors compliance and provides technical support where performance is below standard. The standard follows the funding.

SECTOR 1

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Cyclic City — Moving Always, Stopping Never

The Matatu Transformation

The matatu is Kenya's greatest organic infrastructure achievement. It moves 3 million people daily in Nairobi alone with no public subsidy and no formal infrastructure. The programme does not replace it. It completes it — giving it the vehicle standards, the route infrastructure, and the operating model that converts it from an informal system into the formal backbone of national urban transit.

The Cyclic Route Model

The fundamental operating principle of the transformed matatu system is continuous movement. Matatus run designated loops — they never park on the street waiting for passengers. A vehicle on its route is earning. A vehicle parked is blocking. The loop is fixed, the frequency is known, every stop on the loop is served at a published interval.

Terminus dwell time is eliminated from street operations. Driver changeovers, fuelling, and scheduled maintenance happen at designated off-street facilities — compact interchange nodes positioned at route crossings, not large holding termini. A pull-off bay, a driver changeover point, a fuel point, a rest facility. The matatu completes its changeover and re-enters the loop within minutes.

THE CYCLIC PRINCIPLE	A matatu that is on the road is serving the city. A matatu parked on the street is blocking it. The cyclic model ends street parking by making continuous movement the only financially rational behaviour.

Vehicle Standardisation

A national Matatu Vehicle Standard is legislated as a phase-in requirement. New vehicles entering the fleet from Year 1 must meet the standard. Existing vehicles have a five-year compliance window with a subsidised upgrade scheme. The standard specifies minimum passenger capacity by route category, structural and mechanical safety requirements, emissions standard, accessibility for passengers with disabilities, and fare payment system compatibility.

The exterior design is free. The graffiti stays. The artwork stays. The cultural identity of the matatu — one of Nairobi's most distinctive and globally recognised creative expressions — is protected explicitly by the standard. What changes is the mechanical and safety specification, not the aesthetic character. A beautifully decorated, structurally sound matatu with working seatbelts and M-Pesa fare payment is not a compromise. It is the Kenyan solution.

Route Formalisation

Every matatu route in every Kenyan city is formally designated, mapped, and published. Route designation is recognition, not restriction. The route gets its infrastructure: defined stops with shelters and real-time arrival information, defined interchange nodes with facilities, priority lanes on congested corridors. The SACCO operating each route receives a formal route licence — an asset that is transferable and bankable, the basis for fleet financing from formal lenders.

Timed Movements — 24 Hours

The formal route operates on a published frequency schedule around the clock. Peak hours carry higher frequency and shorter headways. Off-peak hours carry longer headways but never zero frequency. The city that functions at all hours — night shift workers, early morning market traders, airport staff, hospital workers — has transit at all hours. The informal gap-fillers that serve these workers currently do so at significant personal risk and cost. The formal system eliminates the gap.

BRT Corridors — Physical Enforcement

On the city's highest-demand corridors — Jogoo Road, Ngong Road, Thika Road, Outer Ring Road — BRT-standard infrastructure is installed. The critical design principle: enforcement is physical, not regulatory. A kerbed separation between the BRT lane and general traffic is self-enforcing. No traffic officer is needed to stop a matatu from entering a lane bounded by a 150mm raised kerb. Camera enforcement backs up the physical infrastructure. Signal priority at intersections maintains flow in the BRT lane regardless of general traffic conditions.

The BRT corridors are operated by formalised matatu SACCOs running standardised vehicles on the cyclic model. This is not a new system requiring new operators. It is the existing system given the infrastructure it has always lacked.

Long-Term Mass Transit — The Metro Programme

A city of 10 million cannot be served by surface transit alone regardless of how well it is organised. The long-term programme establishes three layers of mass transit matched to corridor demand:

Underground Metro	The highest-density corridors — Umoja-Eastlands-CBD and the CBD-Westlands-Upper Hill arc — require underground metro. Planned now, aligned now, so every surface development above the corridor preserves the tunnel alignment. The metro is a 20 to 30 year construction programme. It is planned today so it can be built tomorrow without demolishing what was built in the interim.
Elevated Rail	The Westlands-Kilimani-Upper Hill corridor suits elevated rail given road widths and development patterns. Connects the western commercial district to the CBD and onward to Upperhill without surface disruption.
SGR Commuter Extension	The existing SGR commuter service becomes the eastern spine. New stations at Mukuru, the Industrial Area, and Embakasi connect the 2 million residents within walking distance of the line. Frequency every 15 minutes peak, 30 minutes off-peak. Fare integration with matatu system — one payment, any combination of modes.
BRT Network	Arterial corridors where metro investment is not yet justified operate BRT with dedicated lanes, physical enforcement, and cyclic matatu operations. BRT is not the permanent solution for the highest-demand corridors — it is the bridge infrastructure that serves the city well while the metro is built.

Rail Integration

All transit modes connect. A passenger taking the SGR commuter from Syokimau can transfer to a BRT corridor matatu at Imara Daima with a single fare payment covering both legs. A passenger taking the metro from Eastlands can transfer to the Westlands elevated rail at a CBD interchange with

no additional payment. The system is integrated — not a collection of competing services but a single network with multiple modes matched to different corridor demands.

The Jua Kali sector receives the same formalisation treatment as transit. Formal shared workspaces with power, water, storage, and market access replace pavement operations. The craftsman's skills and creativity — already among the most impressive adaptive manufacturing capabilities in East Africa — are given the conditions they deserve. Product development support, market linkages, export connections. The informal economy transforms because its conditions transform.

SECTOR 2

WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Resource City — Nothing is Waste Until Proven Otherwise

The Circular Architecture

Kenya generates 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes of waste per day. 70 to 80 percent of it is organic and directly recoverable as compost and biogas. The remainder is predominantly recyclable. The true residual — material that genuinely cannot be reused, recycled, or composted — is perhaps 15 percent of the total stream. Nairobi treats 100 percent as a disposal problem. The programme treats 85 percent as a resource.

The circular waste architecture redesigns every stage of the waste system — from the moment waste is generated at the household or market to its conversion into compost, biogas, recycled material, or residual energy. Nothing leaves the system as loss if it can be converted to value.

Source Separation — The Foundation

Every household, market stall, and commercial premises separates waste at source into three streams: organic, recyclable, and residual. Three colour-coded containers at every collection point. The separation is enforced not by fine but by collection design — the collection schedule is different for each stream, and contamination of a stream results in it being left uncollected until corrected. The incentive to separate is the collection itself.

The Collection Hierarchy

Community collection points every 200 metres — maintained by the Maintenance Corps, emptied on a published weekly schedule. Street-level Maintenance Corps waste teams sweep and collect daily. Sub-county transfer stations receive from community vehicles and consolidate for processing. The collection chain has no gaps. Every separated piece of waste that leaves a household reaches a processing facility.

The Tech Fleet — Mechanised Cleaning

The street cleaning and waste collection fleet is modern and mechanised. Manual sweeping handles what machines cannot reach. Machines handle the volume.

Sweeper Trucks	Mechanical road sweepers covering carriageway surfaces on a daily schedule on all primary and secondary streets. Rotating brush and vacuum collection. Electric-powered in the dense urban core.
Hoover Trucks	Vacuum units dedicated to drainage channel cleaning — pulling debris from kerb drains before it enters the storm system and blocks it. Scheduled fortnightly on all streets, weekly on high-footfall routes.
Jet-Wash Units	High-pressure washing units for periodic deep cleaning of markets, bus interchange nodes, public open spaces, and high-footfall pedestrian areas. Scheduled monthly, emergency deployment after major events.

Collection Vehicles	Dedicated vehicles for each waste stream — organic, recyclable, residual — on different schedules. GPS-tracked. Published route schedules accessible by residents.
River Patrol Boats	Small motorised boats patrolling the restored river corridors collecting floating debris before it accumulates at weirs and gates. Daily operation on all restored river sections.

The fleet is electric where operationally possible, charged from the waste-to-energy output of the residual processing facilities. The waste system powers its own collection infrastructure.

Organic Processing — The Compost and Biogas Network

Each sub-county has a composting and anaerobic digestion facility scaled to its organic waste volume. The process is simultaneous: the organic material feeds an anaerobic digester that produces biogas and a nutrient-rich digestate. The biogas powers the facility and feeds surplus into the local grid or is distributed as cooking gas in cylinders. The digestate is composted to produce high-quality agricultural compost — sold to urban and peri-urban farmers, to the county's parks programme, and to the national soil restoration programme.

Nairobi's waste feeds Nairobi's food system. The city stops exporting its fertility to Dandora and starts cycling it back into the agricultural economy that supplies it.

Jua Kali Recycling Hubs

The 3,000 families currently working at Dandora doing skilled recycling work in appalling conditions are moved progressively to Jua Kali Recycling Hubs — formal workspaces with power, water, equipment, and market linkages. Each sub-county has a hub. The hub handles the recyclable stream from its catchment: sorting, cleaning, processing, and baling plastic, metal, paper, and glass for sale to manufacturers.

The Dandora dumpsite closes progressively as the hub network reaches full capacity. Not by eviction and demolition — by replacement. The workers who currently sort at Dandora have first right of employment in the hub network. Their skills are what the hub needs. Their income improves because the working conditions improve and the formal market price for properly processed recyclables exceeds the informal dumpsite price.

Waste to Energy — The Residual Solution

The true residual stream — 15 to 20 percent of total waste — goes to controlled thermal conversion facilities generating electricity. Two facilities in Nairobi at the Dandora and Kibera sites. Properly engineered with full emissions controls. The energy output powers the waste collection fleet and contributes to the local grid. As the circular economy matures and the residual stream shrinks, the facilities are progressively downscaled — the goal is to make them redundant by designing waste out of the system at source.

SECTOR 3

SEWERAGE AND WATER

The Invisible City — Built Below, Transforming Above

The Primary Trunk Programme — New Infrastructure, Zero Disruption

Nairobi's sewer system was designed for 500,000 people. It serves 7 million on the same infrastructure. The programme does not patch the existing system. It builds new primary trunk infrastructure alongside and below the existing network using Tunnel Boring Machines, with the city continuing to function above.

The Four Catchment Trunks

Nairobi's topography divides naturally into four primary drainage catchments, each receiving a new primary sewer trunk bored under its major arterial:

Nairobi River Trunk	Bored under Uhuru Highway and the CBD core. Intercepts all sewage currently flowing to the Nairobi River from the CBD, Kilimani, Westlands, and inner industrial areas. The largest trunk — 2.4 metre diameter, 18 kilometre length.
Mathare Trunk	Bored under Thika Road and the northern arterials. Intercepts sewage from Mathare, Huruma, Kariobangi, Kasarani, and the northern estates. Eliminates the primary source of Mathare River pollution.
Ngong-Mukuru Trunk	Bored under Ngong Road and Mombasa Road. Intercepts sewage from Kibera, Langata, South B, South C, and the Mukuru settlements. Eliminates Ngong River pollution and the open sewage conditions in Mukuru.
Eastern Trunk	Bored under Outer Ring Road and Jogoo Road. Serves Eastlands — Umoja, Kayole, Komarock, Embakasi, and the Pipeline corridor. The upgrade to the 260km sewer rehabilitation recently initiated, extended and completed at trunk scale.

Sewage Processing Centres

Each primary trunk connects to a dedicated sewage processing centre matched to its catchment. Between two and six facilities depending on the catchment mapping and population served. Each facility operates to a tertiary treatment standard — the treated effluent discharged to the river system meets the quality that sustains the aquatic ecology of the restored linear parks downstream.

Each processing centre is also an energy and resource facility: biogas captured from the primary digestion process powers the facility. Treated sludge is processed to agricultural biosolid grade and supplied to the compost network. The sewage treatment works is part of the circular economy — not just a waste processing facility but a resource recovery facility.

Secondary and Tertiary Rollout

With the primary trunks operational, secondary connections roll outward through the block upgrade programme. The complete streets protocol — one trench, all services — lays the secondary sewer

main in the same trench as the upsized water main, storm drain, power conduit, and fibre. The secondary main connects each block to the primary trunk. Individual plot connections follow from the secondary main.

The discipline: no block is considered complete until every plot in it has a functioning sewer connection. Partial connection creates illegal discharge points that undermine the whole system. Complete connection or the block is not commissioned.

Informal Settlements — Done Fresh

Informal settlements do not get patched systems. They get new systems designed specifically for their physical reality.

Condominial sewerage — where a single branch pipe serves a cluster of households collectively before connecting to the secondary main — reduces the length of pipe required and is appropriate to the organic settlement layout where individual plot connections are physically impractical. Small-bore simplified sewer technology handles the reduced flows from lower-density household connections at lower cost and shallower installation depth.

The design is done from scratch for each settlement — surveying the actual layout, mapping the topography, designing the system that works within the physical constraints. Not a generic template. A settlement-specific design that delivers full sewerage connection to every household.

Water Supply Integration

The sewer upgrade and water supply upgrade are the same programme, run by the same team, in the same trench. Every household gaining a sewer connection gains a metered water connection simultaneously. The non-revenue water loss — currently estimated at 40 to 50 percent of Nairobi's supply — is cut progressively as aged pipes are replaced. Pressure that could not reach upper floors in Eastlands becomes adequate when the supply main is no longer losing half its flow through cracks and illegal connections. The water system pays for itself through recovered revenue from connections that were previously unmetered or unconnected.

SECTOR 4

STREETS, DRAINAGE AND RIVERS

The Complete City — Every Street Finished, Every River Alive

The Complete Street Standard

The national complete street standard applies to every block in every city in Kenya. The standard is ambitious. Physical exceptions are documented. The standard is never lowered.

The cross-section, from building face to building face: building setback with landscaping strip — footpath minimum 1.5 metres — kerbed drainage channel — carriageway (6 metres residential, 9 metres collector, 12 metres arterial) — kerbed drainage channel — footpath minimum 1.5 metres — landscaping strip — building setback.

Under the carriageway in a defined services corridor: water main, sewer main, storm drain, power conduit, fibre conduit. All five in every street. All five upgraded simultaneously when any one is touched.

Every intersection has pedestrian crossings with dropped kerbs. Every 50 metres on major pedestrian routes a dropped kerb crossing exists regardless of intersection. The city is walkable as an engineering standard, not an aspiration.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENT STREETS	Where physical constraints prevent full standard compliance — narrow pathways between permanent structures — the programme defines the minimum primary network that must be maintained, documents the constraint, and programmes gradual resolution as the settlement is upgraded over time. No exception is permanent.

The River Retention Cascade — Ponds, Not Chambers

The storm drainage strategy rejects distributed underground retention chambers at street level — too complex, too expensive to maintain, and creating subsidence risk in Nairobi's volcanic soils. Instead the retention system is built where retention makes most sense and is most valuable: along the river corridor itself.

A series of retention ponds along each river's length — four to six ponds per river within the city — functions as a managed cascade. Street drainage feeds the first pond rather than the river channel directly. The pond fills during the storm event. A weir and gate structure controls the release rate into the next downstream pond, preventing the flood surge that damages banks and inundates settlements downstream. The gates manage the release to a rate the river channel can handle without overtopping its banks.

Between rain events the gates maintain the ponds at a defined recreational water level. The storm management infrastructure and the recreational water amenity are the same infrastructure. One construction programme delivers flood protection and public amenity simultaneously.

Pond sizing	Each pond is sized to hold the peak 1-in-10-year storm flow from its upstream

	catchment for a minimum of 12 hours, releasing at a rate the downstream channel handles without flooding.
Water quality	Sedimentation chambers at pond inflows allow suspended solids to settle before water enters the recreational pond. Water quality is monitored weekly. Aeration systems maintain dissolved oxygen for aquatic life.
Recreational use	Where pond width and depth allow — minimum 40 metres wide, minimum 2 metres deep — rowing, kayaking, paddleboarding and small boat activities are licensed. Revenue from activity licensing partially funds pond maintenance.
Gate management	All weirs and gates are managed by the Water Corps river team, coordinating with the Hydrological Intelligence Unit on rainfall forecasts. Pre-event drawdown — lowering pond levels before forecast heavy rain — maximises retention capacity when it is needed.

The River Banking Programme

When the Water Corps restores each river after the sewerage programme has eliminated the primary pollution sources, the bank engineering is formal and permanent. Two levels of bank protection are constructed:

- Lower bank — the active channel carrying normal and managed flood flows. Formally engineered stone or reinforced concrete toe protection at the waterline, defining the channel precisely and preventing the erosion that has progressively narrowed Nairobi's rivers over decades. This stops informal encroachment re-establishing at the water's edge.
- Upper bank — the transition from active channel to linear park level. Terraced and landscaped, creating the seating steps, planted margins, and defined access points to the water that make the space usable. Formally designed. Maintained by the Settlement Maintenance Corps parks team permanently.

The linear park that results from the combined retention pond cascade and formally banked river corridor is Nairobi's most powerful public space — connecting neighbourhoods currently separated by open sewers, providing recreational water amenity in a dense city that has almost none, and managing the flood events that have killed and displaced thousands over the course of the city's history.

SECTOR 5

FACILITIES PROGRAMME

The Served City — Social Infrastructure for Every Kenyan

The Facilities Standard

Physical infrastructure without social infrastructure is a serviced desert. The Settlement Code specifies the minimum facilities provision within defined walking distances of every dwelling in every settlement at every density level.

Walking Distance	Required Facilities	Standard
400 metres	Public open space, waste collection point, street lighting, potable water point	Open space minimum 500m². Water point if no household connection. Lighting to minimum lux standard on all streets.
800 metres	Primary school, dispensary, community market, community centre	School meets national space standards. Health post with maternity capability. Market with defined stalls and sanitation.
1.5 kilometres	Secondary school, health centre, major market, sports ground, matatu interchange	Sports ground minimum 1 hectare. Health centre with inpatient capability. Interchange node with shelter and real-time information.

The Land Question — Three Solutions

In dense informal settlements, land for public facilities is the primary constraint. The programme addresses this through three mechanisms that together release the land that the standard requires:

- Riparian buffer restoration releases land for public use. The legally protected 30-metre riparian buffer on each river — currently encroached but publicly owned — becomes linear park and public facility land as the programme progressively clears encroachments through managed relocation. The land is already public. It simply needs to be reclaimed.
- Land value capture: public infrastructure investment upgrades surrounding land values. A portion of that increment is captured through a levy on development within the upgrade zone, funding public facilities in the same area. The upgrade pays for its own social infrastructure complement.
- Vertical integration: where horizontal land is not available, public facilities go vertical. A four-storey community building with a health post at ground level, primary school on floors one and two, community centre on floor three, and rooftop sports facilities on floor four. Proven in Hong Kong, Singapore, and increasingly in Latin American cities. Appropriate for the highest-density Kenyan settlements.

SECTOR 6

THE SETTLEMENT MAINTENANCE CORPS

The Permanent City — Built Once, Maintained Forever

The Institutional Design

The Settlement Maintenance Corps is established by Act of Parliament as a permanent national institution — same standing, same design principles, same protected appropriation as the Kenya Railway Corps, the Kenya National Ambulance Corps, and the Kenya Water Construction and Maintenance Corps. Nationally trained. Nationally standardised. Locally deployed.

The Corps is the answer to Kenya's most consistent infrastructure failure: things are built and not maintained. Roads degrade. Lights break. Drains block. Water points fail. The pattern ends when maintenance is an institution, not an afterthought — when the person responsible for the drain outside your door has a name, a uniform, a schedule, and a published performance record.

The Ward Maintenance Unit — The Basic Cell

Every ward in every city and town in Kenya has a Ward Maintenance Unit permanently deployed. The unit has five teams, each responsible for a defined scope of work within the ward:

Street Maintenance Team	Road surface repair, kerb maintenance, street furniture, signage. Daily inspection of all primary streets. 72-hour response to all reported failures on secondary streets.
Utilities Team	Street lighting maintenance and relamping, public water point maintenance and repair, drainage unblocking, manhole cover replacement. 24-hour response to lighting failures, 48-hour to water point failures.
Waste and Cleaning Team	Daily street sweeping of all classified streets. Weekly sweeping of all pathways and public spaces. Operation of mechanised sweeper and hoover trucks on schedule. Waste collection point management and collection vehicle operation.
Green Team	Public open space maintenance, tree planting and management, grass cutting, riparian buffer maintenance, flower planting and care. Maintains all public greenery within the ward to a published standard.
River Team	Coordinates with Water Corps on river channel maintenance. Daily debris patrol on all restored river sections. Bank inspection and reporting. Retention pond monitoring and gate operation. River patrol boat operation.

The five teams together are the Ward Maintenance Unit. They are not contractors. They are permanent employees of the Corps, deployed to their ward, living in their community, accountable to the people they serve.

National Training — The Settlement Maintenance Academy

The National Settlement Maintenance Academy — co-located with the Water Corps Academy — produces standardised corps members on a continuous intake cycle. Six-month foundation training

covering all five team disciplines plus the Kenya Settlement Code, the 72-hour response standard, equipment operation, community engagement, and the performance reporting system.

The Academy intake never stops. New corps members are trained continuously as the programme expands to more towns, as urban populations grow, and as natural attrition requires replacement. The Academy is permanent employment infrastructure — not a project with a completion date. Every year Kenya trains another cohort of Settlement Maintenance Corps members. Every year they are deployed to cities and towns across all 47 counties.

The 72-Hour Standard — The Accountability Instrument

Every maintenance failure — a broken streetlight, a blocked drain, an overflowing waste collection point, a pothole — is reported through a published digital channel accessible to every resident. The ward maintenance unit has 72 hours to resolve the failure from the time of report. Failures that exceed 72 hours are escalated to the county Corps Commander. Failures that exceed one week are escalated to the national Corps Director-General.

Performance against the 72-hour standard is published monthly for every ward in every city. The publication is public — accessible to residents, county governments, national government, and the media. A ward that is consistently below standard is visible to everyone. The political cost of visible failure is the incentive for adequate budget allocation.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY LOOP	If you can see a broken streetlight, a blocked drain, or an overflowing waste point for more than 72 hours, the ward maintenance team has failed its standard. That failure is published. That publication is the accountability.

County Budget Integration — The National Standard

The Corps deployment cost is shared between national and county government. The national government funds training, equipment, the Academy, and the supervision structure. The county government funds the ward-level deployment — the salaries of the corps members working in their county. This is the mechanism that embeds the standard permanently into county budgets.

It is not optional. A county that wants Corps deployment — and every county wants it because the alternative is unmanaged deterioration — must budget the deployment cost. The standard settlement code accompanies the funding requirement: counties are told what they are budgeting for, what the standard is, and what performance they are expected to achieve.

The Water Corps coordinates with the Settlement Maintenance Corps on river restoration, sharing equipment, expertise, and the Hydrological Intelligence Unit's data on rainfall patterns, flood events, and river health. Two corps, one river system, coordinated action.

PART TWO: THE TRANSFORMATION SEQUENCE

The programme runs in parallel streams across all six sectors simultaneously. The city is never entirely under construction. Sections are completed and operational while others are being upgraded. The sequence builds the compound effect — each completed block generates the tariff revenue and community confidence that funds and accelerates the next.

Years 1 to 3 — Foundations

- Establish the Settlement Maintenance Academy and begin the first national intake.
- Deploy Ward Maintenance Units to the 10 highest-priority wards in each major city as the pilot phase.
- Complete the city-wide standards assessment — every block scored, the upgrade sequence set.
- Begin TBM boring of the primary sewer trunks on the first two catchments in each major city.
- Formalise the first 20 matatu routes in each city — route licences, published schedules, interchange nodes.
- Pilot the block upgrade programme on 50 blocks across all cities — demonstrate the one-trench protocol.
- Identify and acquire the site for each sewage processing centre.
- Commission the first sub-county Jua Kali Recycling Hub and organic processing facility.

Years 3 to 7 — The Compound Effect

- Primary sewer trunks operational on all four catchments in Nairobi. Secondary connections rolling out block by block.
- All major matatu routes formally licensed and operating on the cyclic model. BRT lanes installed on the first two arterial corridors.
- All Ward Maintenance Units deployed in every ward of every city with population above 100,000.
- River decontamination programme substantially complete — sewage inflows eliminated on restored river sections. Riparian buffer restoration underway.
- First retention pond cascade operational on the Nairobi River. Linear park section open to the public.
- Organic processing network covering 60 percent of urban population. Dandora dumpsite progressively closing.
- Metro alignment study complete. Corridor preservation rules in force for the Eastlands-CBD underground alignment.

Years 7 to 15 — The Visible Transformation

- Every ward in every Kenyan city and town has an operational Ward Maintenance Unit performing to the 72-hour standard.
- All three river corridors in Nairobi fully restored, banked, and operating as linear parks with retention pond cascades.

- Sewage processing centres operational on all catchments. Dandora dumpsite closed. Circular economy processing network at full capacity.
- SGR commuter service extended and upgraded. BRT operating on all major arterials with physical lane enforcement.
- Metro planning and initial tunnelling underway on the Eastlands-CBD alignment.
- The Kenya Settlement Code operating in all 47 counties. Every county budgeting the Maintenance Corps deployment as a statutory line item.
- A resident of Umoja, Mathare, Mukuru, or any informal settlement in any Kenyan town experiences what a resident of Kilimani has always experienced: a streetlight that works, a drain that does not flood, a collection point that is emptied, a water connection with pressure, a sewer that does not back up.

THE HORIZON	By Year 15, the question is not whether Nairobi functions as a modern city. The question is which other Kenyan city — Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret — has moved furthest fastest. The programme creates competition for quality, not acceptance of inequality.

CLOSING: THE CITY THAT WAS ALWAYS THERE

Nairobi does not need to be invented. It needs to be finished.

The matatu that is chaotic becomes the formal transit system — its graffiti intact, its drivers' livelihoods protected, its routes regularised, its vehicles standardised, its loops continuous and timed.

The jua kali craftsman on the pavement gets a workshop with power, water, storage, and a market. Their skills, already extraordinary, find the conditions they deserve.

The pipe under the road carries all five services, laid in one trench, one time. The underground city is transformed without stopping the city above.

The river that flooded Mathare and killed its people becomes the linear park that serves them — its banks formally engineered, its ponds managing the storm surge, its waters clear enough for rowing.

The waste that poisoned Dandora becomes compost for the farms that feed the city and biogas for the kitchens of its residents.

The corps member in their uniform sweeps the street, empties the collection point, fixes the light, and clears the drain — every day, in every ward, in every city, permanently.

One city. Every city. To the same standard. For everyone.

Mji ni Watu. Tunaujenga. Tunauendesha.